

CHAPTER 26

Understanding the Bible:

M E T H O D S

of

T R A N S L A T O R S

&

M A R T Y R S

1300s - 1568



USE THE BIBLE'S
BUILT-IN DICTIONARY



USE THEIR SEVEN KEYS:
SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED

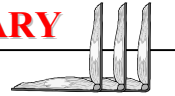
☞ Fear ☞ Believe

☞ Be Humble ☞ Pray

☞ Obey ☞ Memorize ☞ Read



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE
UPON THE BIBLE WITH METER



How did Bible translators, such as Tyndale and Coverdale, study the Bible? Did they teach their readers to use linguistic skills in Greek, Hebrew or Latin to study or ‘define’ Bible words and concepts? No.

In **Tyndale’s** New Testament *Prologue*, he taught the reader “wherewith the scripture is locked up” and “with what keys it is so opened,” along with the “right use also of the scripture” (Tyndale Bible, Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 1997, p.1). Tyndale described the English Bible’s built-in dictionary as a “true key to open” the scriptures. Tyndale looked in the English Bible for the Bible’s own parallelisms. This was one of the “secrets of his study,” as Foxe called them (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 122). Tyndale’s *Prologue* advised:

“And in many places, where the text seemeth at the first chop hard to be understood, yet the circustaces [surrounding words and verses] **before and after**, and **often reading together**, make it plain enough” (Tyndale, New Testament, Chadwyck, pp. 1, 2).

Because the Bible *teaches* the meaning of its own words, “...many used Tyndale’s New Testament to learn to read, as well as to learn about the Christian faith” (McGrath, p. 78). The Bible’s parallel definitions occur in the original languages, as well as in the earliest English editions. Tyndale had observed the Greek, and especially the Hebrew Bible’s “propensity for the parallel phrase...**[It] was especially true of Anglo-Saxon**, enabling Tyndale to

draw on traditions of native expressions” (Benson Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters*, NYC: Simon & Schuster, 2001, p. 119).

Tyndale complained that Bible teachers in his day “would darken the right sense...with worldly similitudes [secularized synonyms]...contrary unto the process, order, and meaning of the text” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 118). The *Prologue* to the Great Bible of 1540 also warned against giving a word “meaning” from any “private interpretation.”

“[W]hen thou comest at such a place where...thou canst not attain to the **meaning** and true knowledge of that sentence, then do not rashly presume to make any **private interpretation...**” (The Great Bible, Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 1997, p. 5).

Coverdale agreed saying,

“[L]et **one text expound another** unto thee...[L]et the **plain text** be thy guide, and the spirit of God (which is the author thereof) shall lead thee in all truth” (J.R. Dore, *Old Bibles*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 2nd ed., p. 111).

“[T]here cometh more knowledge and **understanding** of the scripture by their sundry **translations [in different verses]**, than by all the glosses [definitions] of our sophistical doctors. For that one [scripture] interpreteth [translates] something obscurely in **one place**, the same translateth another [place] more manifestly by a more plain vocable [word] of the same meaning in **another place...**[He gave several examples of the built-in dictionary]...**[T]he interpreters have done so before me...**Only our hearts desire unto God, is,

that his people be not blinded in their **understanding...** “Again, it shall greatly help thee to **understand scripture**, if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and unto whom, **with what words**, at what time where, to what intent, with what circumstance, **considering what goeth before, and what followeth after**” (Coverdale Bible, Chadwyck, pp. 10, 7).

MARTYRS and Word Meaning

- ❖ **John Frith**, close friend of William Tyndale, was burned at the stake for writing that we should —

“[U]nderstand Christ’s words...according to the order and phrase of speech, **comparing phrase with phrase**, according to the analogy of the Scripture...The very words which **follow**, sufficiently **declare**...the true **meaning**...” (Fexe, vol. 5, pp. 6, 13, 15).

- ❖ In 1543 **John Marbeck**, began to make an English “Concordance of the Bible,” listing *all* of its words and *where* they were used. When imprisoned for making such a work, he wrote that he was guilty of nothing except “the reading of the New Testament, which is common to all men...” He realized that to find and expand one’s understanding of how *God* uses a word, it is sometimes necessary to examine that word in its other contexts. Knowing the Bible well is helpful; using a concordance to find *all* of a word’s usages allows a thorough study. Marbeck said, “When Thomas Matthew’s Bible came first out in print, I was much desirous to have one of them, I determined with myself to borrow one amongst my friends, and to write it forth.” He testified that he had begun creating

this original concordance six years previous and “I am yet but in the letter L...” (Foxe, vol. 5, pp. 474-478). Only apostates, like James Strong, corrupt the pure purpose of a concordance and add *their own personal translations* and definitions in the back in so-called Greek and Hebrew lexicons.

- ❖ The manner of interpreting the Bible was a bone of contention between the Christians and those who would burn them at the stake. **Thomas Causton** and **Thomas Higbed** were burned at the stake in 1555; their *Confession of Faith* said:

“[W]ords...must be searched out by **other open Scriptures**, whereby we may come to the spiritual understanding of them, which shall be most to the glory of God: for, as the holy apostle saith, ‘There is **no** Scripture that hath any **private interpretation**’ **Besides this, Scriptures are full of the like figurative speeches...[built-in dictionary]**” (Foxe, vol. 6, p. 735).

- ❖ The issue of *how* the Bible was to be taught and understood was *so* hotly contended, that in 1555, as **Rawlins White** was tied to the stake, his **last words** defended the Bible’s own definitions. To the crowd who had just heard a priest misinterpret scripture to them, White cried out,

“‘Come hither, good people; and hear not a false prophet preaching:’ and then [he] said unto the preacher [priest], ‘Ah thou naughty hypocrite! dost thou presume to prove thy false doctrine by Scripture? **Look in the text that followeth**:...O Lord receive my spirit!’” (Foxe, vol. 7, p. 33).



THE PROBLEM

“For all have **sinned**, and come short of the glory of God.”
Rom. 3:23

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are **spiritually discerned**.” 1 Cor. 2:14

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” John 3:3-7.

THE PENALTY

“For the wages of sin is **death**; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom. 6:23

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ **died for us**.” Rom. 5:8

THE PROMISE

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the **Lord Jesus**, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be **saved**.” Rom. 10:9

Jesus said, “I am the **door**: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved...” John 10:9

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might **understand the scriptures**...” Luke 24:45



Methods of Martyrs and Translators

After receiving Jesus Christ as Saviour, the indwelling “Holy Ghost teacheth” the “spiritually discerned” scriptures; he will guide into all truth and lead believers to:

1. 🔑 **Fear God:**
“The **fear** of the LORD is the **beginning** of knowledge:” (Prov. 1:7).
2. 🔑 **Believe the Bible is the very word of God:**
“Through **faith** we understand...” (Heb. 11:3).
3. 🔑 **Be Humble:**
“[T]he **meeke** will he teach his way” (Ps. 25:9).
4. 🔑 **Pray:**
“If any of you lack wisdom, let him **ask** of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).
5. 🔑 **Desire to Obey:**
“I understand more than the ancients, because I **keep** thy precepts” (Ps. 119:100).
6. 🔑 **Meditate on Memorized scripture:**
“I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my **meditation**” (Ps. 119:99).
7. 🔑 **Read the Bible again and again:**
“...when ye **read**, ye may understand...” (Eph. 3:4).

1. Understanding the Bible: Fear God



Cranmer said, “[F]lesh is a cloud before the soul’s eye...” Once we are born again, faith and fear toward God dissolve fleshly fears, doubts and questions.

“Therefore, sayeth he, **the fear of God** must be **the first beginning** and, as it were, an abce or an introduction to all them that shall enter to the very true and most fruitful knowledge of holy scripture” (Great Bible, Chadwyck, p. 12).

2. Understanding the Bible: Believe It



Translator and martyr, William **Tyndale** compared the Bible to a “precious jewel,” whose “value” must be recognized and whose words must be *believed* to benefit the reader; doubts cast upon the words of God are as firebrands, melting men of straw (Tyndale Bible, Pentateuch, Chadwyck, p. 3). “[T]he shield of faith” will “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph. 6:16).

“But God looketh first on the heart; what **faith** thou hast to his words” (Fexe, vol. 5, pp. 575, 576).

Many who saw and even touched Jesus Christ did not *know* what majesty was within their reach. And so it is with our majestic English Bible. **William Thorpe**, when examined during his imprisonment said,

“[M]en and women here in the earth, touched Christ, and saw him, and knew his bodily person, which neither touched, nor

saw, nor knew ghostly his Godhead, right thus, Sir, many men now touch, and see, and write, and read the Scriptures of God's law, which neither see, touch, nor read effectually, the gospel. For, as the Godhead of Christ (that is, the virtue of God) is **known by** the virtue of **belief**, so...Christ's **word**..." (Foxe, vol. 3, p. 275).

Translator Miles **Coverdale** said that "if thou find ought therein it, thou understandest not...ascribe it to thine own ignorance, not to the scripture..." (Coverdale Bible, Chadwyck, p. 7).

"Salt laid on a sore, if it doth vex it, the fault is not the salt, but in the flesh, which cannot abide it" (Foxe, vol. 6, p. 31, note 4).

3. *Understanding the Bible:* **Pray**



In 1538 the Bishop of London felt that study without prayer was like lungs without air — no life.

"[B]y devout prayer he shall attain, percase, as much or more, as by study or learning, for **without prayer the words will little prevail**. Look in Christ's life, and thou shalt find in every thing he went about, he prayed..." (Foxe, vol. 5, pp. 174-175).

Martyr **Hugh Latimer** said that worldly wise men, are the *least* likely sources of wisdom and knowledge. Prayer, study and a willing heart *will* prevail.

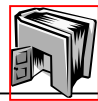
"[Y]ou shall prevail more with praying, than with studying, though mixture be best...For in the first we must stand **only** to the

Scriptures, which are able to make us all perfect and instructed unto salvation, if they be well understood. And they offer themselves to be well **understood** only to them, which have **good wills**, and give themselves to **study** and **prayer**: neither are there any men **less apt** to understand them, than the prudent and **wise men** of the world” (Foxe, vol. 7, pp. 411, 416, 417).

The Bible has always had its own *unique* vocabulary; its words are only “spiritually discerned.” Coverdale said, “[W]hen thou comest to such strange manners of speaking and dark sentences....commit them unto God...” Coverdale’s *Prologue* closes with a suggested prayer, “Because that when thou goest to study holy scripture, thou shouldest do it with reverence...” The prayer reads in part, “Give me understanding according to thy word. Oh give me understanding...” (Coverdale Bible, Chadwyck, pp. 8, 12). Praying with the scriptures, we can ask as David did:

“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” Ps. 119:18

4. Understanding the Bible: Be Meek




God has “hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25). “[E]very **boy** and wench that could read English, thought they spoke with God Almighty and **understood** what he said,” sourly admits Thomas Hobbes, a “wise and prudent” philosopher who lived in the 1600s. “So Wyclif and his dissident Lollard movement were rigorously suppressed” (William McCrum, *The Story of English*, New York: Penguin Group, 1986, p. 110).

Tyndale reminded us that,

“...remembering that as **lowliness** of heart shall make you high with God, even so meekness of words shall make you sink into the hearts of men. Nature giveth age authority, but **meekness** is the glory of youth, and giveth them honour” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 134).

Tyndale warned that colleges “ordained that no man shall look in the Scripture until he be nooselled [OED, “to train in some habit or to dig with the nose, grovel, to be snared”] in heathen learning [The writings of Greek philosophers who are the source of lexical definitions] eight or nine years and armed with false principles with which he is clean shut out of the **understanding** of Scriptures” (McGrath, p. 69).

 ne edition of the Great Bible began the New Testament with an admonition to “search the scriptures” with a humble heart (John 5:39). It advises its readers that the Holy Ghost is the instructor.

“I think it necessary that thou play not the sluggard following the example of the unprofitable drone bee, who liveth only by the honey that the diligent bees gather. But contrary wise, be thou a good bee, **search** for the sweet honey of the most wholesome flowers of **God’s holy word**. And in all this give over thy self to the teaching of **God’s holy Spirit**, who **instructeth** none but the **humble** spirited and such as **seek reformation** of their own mis-living and all such he instructeth to the full, making their hearts a meet temple for him to dwell in...” (Dore, 2nd edition, p. 176).

5. Understanding the Bible: Obey



Tyndale said Christians are to “submit **themselves** unto the word of God, to be **corrected.**” We are **not** to ‘correct’ **it** by “juggling terms...expounding it in many senses...(when it hath but one simple literal sense whose light the owls can not abide)...” Those who are “idle disputers and brawlers about vain words, ever gnawing upon the bitter bark” do not realize—

“It is not enough therefore to read and talk of it only, but we must also desire God day and night instantly to open our eyes, and to make us understand and feel wherefore [for what reason] the scripture was given, that we many **apply** the medicine of the scripture, every man **to his own sores**...This comfort shalt thou evermore find in the **plain text** and literal sense...As thou readest therefore think that every syllable pertaineth to thine own self...” (Tyndale Bible, Pentateuch, Chadwyck, pp. 3, 4, 5).

Obedience brings understanding. “If any man will **do**^{1st} his will, he shall **know**^{2nd} of the doctrine...” John 7:17. The word is a light unto our path; when it is obeyed, “...thine ears shall hear a word **behind thee**, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it...” Isa. 30:21. Knowing sometimes follows going — “[A]s they went...Jesus met them...” Matt. 28:9. **Tyndale** said that God will *fill* a loving vessel that *spills* out to others.

“[H]e that hath **a good heart** toward the word of God and a set purpose to fasten his deeds thereafter and to garnish it with **Godly living** and to **testify it to others**, the same

shall **increase** more and more daily...[in] **true knowledge**...For only **love** and **mercifulness** understandeth the law, and else nothing. And he that hath not them written in his heart, shall never **understand** the law, no: though all the angels of heaven went about to teach him...Love only understandeth...” (Tyndale, Chadwyck, pp. 4, 5).

“He [Tyndale] reserved or hallowed to himself two days in the week, which he named his pastime, Monday and Saturday. On Monday **he visited** all such **poor** men and women as were fled out of England, by reason of persecution, into Antwerp, and these, once well understanding their good exercises and qualities, **he** did very liberally **comfort and relieve**; and in like manner provided for the **sick** and diseased persons.”

“On Saturday, he walked round about the town, seeking every corner and hole, where he suspected any poor person to dwell; and where he found any to be well occupied, and yet overburdened with children, or else were **aged** and weak, those also he **plentifully relieved**. And thus he spent his two days of pastime, as he called them...The rest of the days of the week, he gave wholly to his book...” (Christopher Anderson, *The Annals of the English Bible*, vol. 1, London: William Pickering, 1845, pp. 520-521).

If the Bible we would know,
from us heart and hands should *flow*.
We must lowly go and sow,
— *then* our understanding grows.

James 1:22 reminds us, “Be ye doers of the word...” The Matthew’s Bible note for Rev. 10:9 states,

“God’s word is sweet in the mouth of the faithful, But bitter in the belly, to the flesh it is painful...” (Dore, 2nd ed, p. 123).

6. *Understanding the Bible*: Read Again



A mother sent her daughter with a *basket* to the river to fetch water. The daughter complained because she did not understand the task, since the weak and leaky vessel retained so little. The mother told the teen, ‘Yet, indeed, but the vessel is getting quite clean.’ Foxe said, “The best image of God is his word...As a man readeth so is he fashioned” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 203). Reading cleans us from the “weight” of sin that slows our “race” (Heb. 12:1). Cranmer’s *Prologue* of the Great Bible states,

“Peradventure, they will say unto me: how and if **we understand not** that we read, that is contained in the books. What then? Suppose, thou understand not the deep and profound mysteries of scripture, yet can it not be, but that much fruit and **holiness** must come and grow unto thee **by the reading**: for it cannot be that thou shouldest be ignorant in all things alike. For the holy Ghost hath so ordered and tempered the scriptures, that in them as well publicans, fishers, and shepherds may find their edification...[W]ho is there of so simple wit and capacity, but he may be able to perceive and understand them?”

“These be but **excuses** and cloaks for the raiment, and coverings of their own idle **slothfulness**, I cannot understand it. What marvel? How shouldest thou understand, if thou wilt not **read**, nor look upon it? Take the books into thine hands, read the whole story, and that thou understandest keep it well in memory: that thou understandest not, **read it again and again**...And I doubt not, but God seeing thy diligence and readiness will himself vouchsafe with his Holy Spirit to illuminate thee, and to open unto thee that which was locked from thee” (p. 9).

Mark 4:24 says, “...unto you that hear shall more be given...” We must read the “scriptures daily,” again and again (Acts 17:11). Our stony hearts and minds hardened in pride are like the hardened dirt in a planting pot. It must be removed bit by bit with daily portions of water; the hardness of the dirt will not absorb a flood of water all at once. Each morning, as we read the Bible, God will “sanctify and cleanse” us with “the washing of water by the word.” God has preserved it and made it available “from generation to generation” (Isa. 51:8) to all parched hearts. The *Prologue* to the Great Bible indicates that the common man had access to the scriptures *in his home* in 1540. Quoting in part from a second century writer, it exhorts,

“[E]very man should **read** by himself **at home** in the mean days and time, between sermon and sermon: ...[T]ake the book in hand, read, weigh, and perceive...[W]hen ye be at home in your houses, ye apply yourselves from time to time to the reading of the holy scriptures...Let no man make excuse and say: ‘I am busy...it is not for me to read the scriptures...’” (p. 8).

7. Understanding the Bible:



Meditate on Memorized Scripture

PRINTED Bibles were not a mandate for minds that meditated on memorized scriptures. **John Rogers**, martyr and Bible editor, wrote a poem to his family before he was burned at the stake. It read in part,

“Give ear my children to my words
whom God had dearly bought.
Lay up his laws within your heart,
and **PRINT them in your thought.**”
(Matt Whitling, *The Grammar of Poetry*,
Moscow, Idaho, 2000, p. 5).

The fires of persecution had burned the Bible into the minds of many.

- ❖ **Thomas Cromwell**, martyr and Lord Protector of England, had **memorized** “the text of the **whole New Testament**” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 363).
- ❖ Those who took **Adam Wallace** to burn him at the stake, “spoiled him of his Bible, which always, til after he was condemned, was with him wherever he went.” He spent the night before he was burned at the stake, singing the **entire book** of Psalms **by heart** or “without book” as they called it then (Foxe, vol. 5, pp. 637-641).
- ❖ **Joan Waste**, a **blind** girl, was a burning beacon at the age of twenty-two, at the stake in the town of Derby. She was able “to **recite many chapters of the New Testament without book.**” She purchased a New Testament with money earned by knitting. With her meager living she “would give a penny or two” to pay people to read the Bible to her (Foxe, vol. 8, pp. 247-248).

- ❖ **Nicholas Ridley**, became a signal fire to our generation; before he was consumed, he had his family members memorize many entire “chapters” of the Bible (Foxe, vol. 7, pp. 430, 408).

Preaching and Memory

- ❖ One pastor kindled such a burning love for the word of God in his church, that it sparked his own holocaust in 1555. In his church —

“[T]he gospel of Christ had such gracious success, and took such root there, that a great number of that parish became exceeding well learned in the holy Scriptures, as well women as men, so that a man might have found among them **many**, that had often read the whole Bible through, and that could have **said** a great sort of **St. Paul’s epistles by heart**, and very well had readily have given a godly learned sentence in any matter of controversy. Their children and servants were also brought up and trained so diligently in the right knowledge of God’s word, that the whole town seemed rather a university of the learned, than a town of cloth-making or labouring people” (Foxe, vol. 6, p. 677).

How did that martyred pastor produce so many church members who could repeat the word by heart? A clue is given in Tyndale’s 1526 New Testament, in the only copy of its title page in existence. It was just recently found (1995) in Stuttgart and reads as follows:

“The New Testament as it was written, and caused to be written, by them which **heard it**. To whom also our Saviour Jesus Christ commanded that they should **preach it** unto all creatures” (Christopher DeHamel, *The Book. A History of the Bible*, London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2001, p. 243, ill. 176; William Tyndale, *The New Testament 1526*, The British Library, 2000, p. 1).

According to Tyndale, the New Testament was “preached,” “heard,” preserved and passed on from *memory*.

“But hath in due times **manifested his word through preaching...**” Titus 1:3

No doubt many pastors obeyed the Bible’s command to “Preach the **word...**” (2 Tim. 4:2) — not stories, news or commentaries. *Bible* exposition should not be ‘stories,’ but the glories *in* the word. The Bible’s built-in definition of “preach” includes the “word.” It pairs “preach” with “the word” over a dozen times (e.g. Mark 2:2, Acts 8:4, 25, 35, 11:19, 13:5, 14:25, 15:35, 15:36, 16:6, 17:13, Rom. 10:8, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:3, Heb. 4:2). (**Preach** means to **reach each** person with the word.)

- ❖ Martyr **John Lambert** said that the seeds sown from the word preached bring forth the precious fruit of a mind reached by God.

“[I]t were a great grace, if we might have the **word of God** diligently and **often spoken** and sung **unto us** in such wise that the people might **understand** it. Yea, then it should come to pass, that craftsmen should sing spiritual Psalms sitting at their work...” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 203).

- ❖ The constant and faithful *preaching of the word* of God instilled the scriptures in the minds of those who could not read...**John Maundrel** became such a “living epistle” that he was burned at the stake, like so many Bibles, in 1556. Foxe said of him:

“[H]e delighted in nothing so much as to **hear** and speak God’s word, never being without the New Testament about him, although he could not read himself. But when he came into any company that could read, his book was always ready, having a good memory, so that he could **recite by heart** most places of the **New Testament**” (Foxe, vol. 8, pp. 102-103).

My view from the pew
has seen only a few,
who don’t preach what’s *new*.
How about you?
We need the word “preached,”
like proud peacocks do,
who perch on the pew.
(Because we won’t read,
it’s our only feed.)

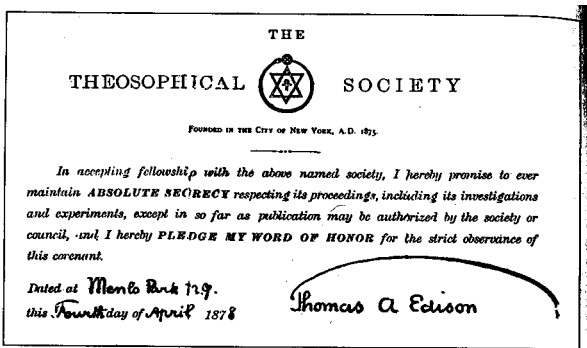
Children: Testament or Television

Tyndale charged parents,

“[T]hou shalt buy them wholesome books, as the holy gospel, the epistles of the holy apostles, yea both the **New and Old Testament**, that they may **understand** and drink of the sweet fountain and waters of life”... “[B]ring thy children to the church, to hear the sermon; and when thou shalt come home, thou shalt ask them what they have kept in **memory** of the sermon...” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 598).

Children’s minds are like computers. Words take up very little ‘memory’ space, but pictures, particularly video images, use up **A LOT** of space. The same storage space gobbled up by a very short video clip could contain the entire Bible. A child’s mind has enough storage space to easily memorize the New Testament, but not if it has stored away thousands of hours of television ‘pictures.’

Thomas Edison, the inventor of this “thief,” who comes to “steal” (John 10:10) so much space, was a card carrying Luciferian. He invented *every* device that brings all this vice. For this he paid a big price. Satan had said, “All this **power** will I give thee...If thou therefore wilt worship me (Luke 4:1-13). Edison entered the Luciferian Theosophical Society of Madame Blavatsky in 1878. The “power” followed at lightning speed with Edison’s invention of the first sound recording, the first **movie picture**, the electric light to project it, and later, the generator to produce the power. The “power of Satan” competes today with God’s command that man is to “live...by every word of God” (Acts 26:18; Job 1:12). (For Theosophy’s influence see Sylvia Cranston, *H.P.B.: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky*, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons Books, 1993); James Sightler, *Westcott’s New Bibles*, Greenville, S.C.: Sightler Publications, 2000; Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions*).



The living rhythmic ‘breath’ and meter on *every line* of our English Bible has been a key to its memorization and preservation. *The Cambridge History of the Bible* observes that Reformation era Bibles convey “happiness” through their “swift and gay” “rhythm.” The word of God can make us happy and can do *everything* that music does for the Christian. Since some pastors seldom “preach the word,” music has taken the place of the Bible in many churches. Some would be more distressed if a musician introduced his own *note* in a song, than if a teacher replaced a Bible word with a marginal *note*. (S.L. Greenslade, ed., vol. 3, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963, p. 144)

Bobrick said Tyndale’s English Bible had “a certain rhythmic sonority...something in the pattern that completely captivated the English ear and directed the language to a form of eloquence that became its paradigm” (Bobrick, p. 119). Tyndale echoes the pre-Wycliffe meter, according to Bobrick.

“[R]hythms and turns of phrase from the Wycliffe version found...echoes in his text”
(Bobrick, p. 104).

Professor of Historical Theology at Oxford, Alister McGrath, affirms that the words in the Tyndale Bible were “well shaped in terms of their alliteration, rhyme, and word repetitions” (McGrath, p. 79). The true Bible has always had “a special rhythm and stress on open vowels” (Daniell, pp. xviii, viii). David Daniell, Yale University Press author of an updated spelling edition of Tyndale’s New Testament, looks at Tyndale through the eyes of a Ph.D. in Shakespearian studies. After years studying theology and

English at Oxford and Tübingen, and lecturing in English at University College in Great Britain, he writes,

“Rhythm depends on the pattern, and to some extent the weight, of stresses. Tyndale understood how to get variety of secondary stresses to make an even flow that pulls the reader along. The opening line of Psalm 115 (possibly Coverdale rather than Tyndale, in fact), is a sentence famously right for public declaration: ‘Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us...’” (Daniell, p. xxi).

Daniell continues —

“Perhaps now, having suffered some **modern versions** concocted by **committees of people with no ears**, we may approach Tyndale’s solitary music with a little humility” (Daniell, p. viii).

New Versions, like the NIV, NASB and NKJV say, “Not to us, O LORD, not to us.” Daniell warns,

“This hurts the ear both in the clash of ‘t’ sounds and in the change from the double light stress in the middle, ‘unto’ (which allows the fullest, and proper, weight on ‘Not’ and ‘us’), to three thudding heavy stresses, ‘Not to us.’ Tyndale’s own variation of ‘to’ and ‘unto’ would make a rich study” (Daniell, p. xxi).

Daniell adds, “Tyndale’s skill with cadences, when to let the voice fall and when not to, would make a useful study.” Daniell examines Romans 13 — “The powers that be are ordained of God” (KJV). He contrasts it to modern versions

like the NIV, NASB, which “duck out of the Greek word-play and turn it into Latin” with words like “authorities that exist (NIV)” (Daniell, p. xxi). His well-trained eye sees miraculous meter everywhere in the Tyndale/KJV readings in Romans 8 —.

“Compare, for example, the firm endings of sentences in the famous Greek *bravura* passage in Romans 8, beginning ‘For we are saved by hope....,’ to the end of the chapter...”

- 1.) “[T]ake the first four sentences only: the first three end in a monosyllabic stress, ‘hope,’ ‘hope,’ ‘seeth’; the next, longer **sentence**, ends with a dactyl, ‘...bide for it.’”
- 2.) “The following paragraph again alternates final monosyllabic, and powerful, stresses – ‘ought,’ ‘tongue,’ ‘God,’ ‘called’ – with trochees ‘spir-it,’ ‘pur-**pose**,’ ‘breth-ren’ – and the ends of the first and last sentences are dactyls again – ‘...fir-mities,’ ‘glor-i-fies’” (Daniell, pp. xxi, xxii).

God did not abandon his Bible to today’s generation of translators who deny that God gave England, one of the “isles,” such a “sharp sword” and “a **polished** shaft” (Isa. 49:1-2).

Meter: Hebrew to English

Daniell said, “He [Tyndale] recognized that he was dealing mostly with poetry. Though the Hebrew is printed as prose, as are his translations, it is clear that he has understood the first structural principle of Hebrew poetry, that of parallelism –

‘He was **wounded for our transgressions**
and **bruised for our iniquities**’
(Daniell, pp. xviii, xix).

The Cambridge History of the Bible describes Coverdale’s contributions to the Bible as “abounding in music, beautifully phrased...more melodious than Tyndale” (vol. 3, p. 149). Coverdale is credited with “melodious expressions especially in the Psalms” (Eric M. North, *The Book of a Thousand Tongues*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938). The *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* refers to Coverdale’s “tender rhythm” (Henry Guppy, *Miles Coverdale and the English Bible*, Manchester: The Manchester University Press, vol. 19, No. 2, July 1935, p. 16). His edition introduced the following nine syllable match in Ps. 51:11 (Bobrick, p. 145).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Cast	me	not	a	way	from	thy	pre	sence
take	not	thy	ho	ly	spir	it	from	me

Daniell says the “**Authorized version [KJV]** gets the **Hebrew** into **better** sense [than Tyndale]...” (Daniell, p. xix):

Tyndale: “Hearken unto me, my people; and **turn** your ears to me my **folk**” (Isa. 51:4).

KJV: “Hearken unto me, my people; and **give ear** to me, O my **nation**.”

Daniell says, modern versions have “lost the sharpness,” creating “a language spoken nowhere on this earth.” He mocks the Roman Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*, which says, “*Pay attention to me, you peoples, Listen to me, you nations.*” He chides, “This is chillingly distant, peremptory and dictatorial. The perspective of the people has vanished...If we are being invited in English to God and salvation, give us Tyndale any day” (Daniell, pp. xix, xx).

Every line of God's true word is miles deep with canyons of unnoticed echoes sounding with majestic meter.

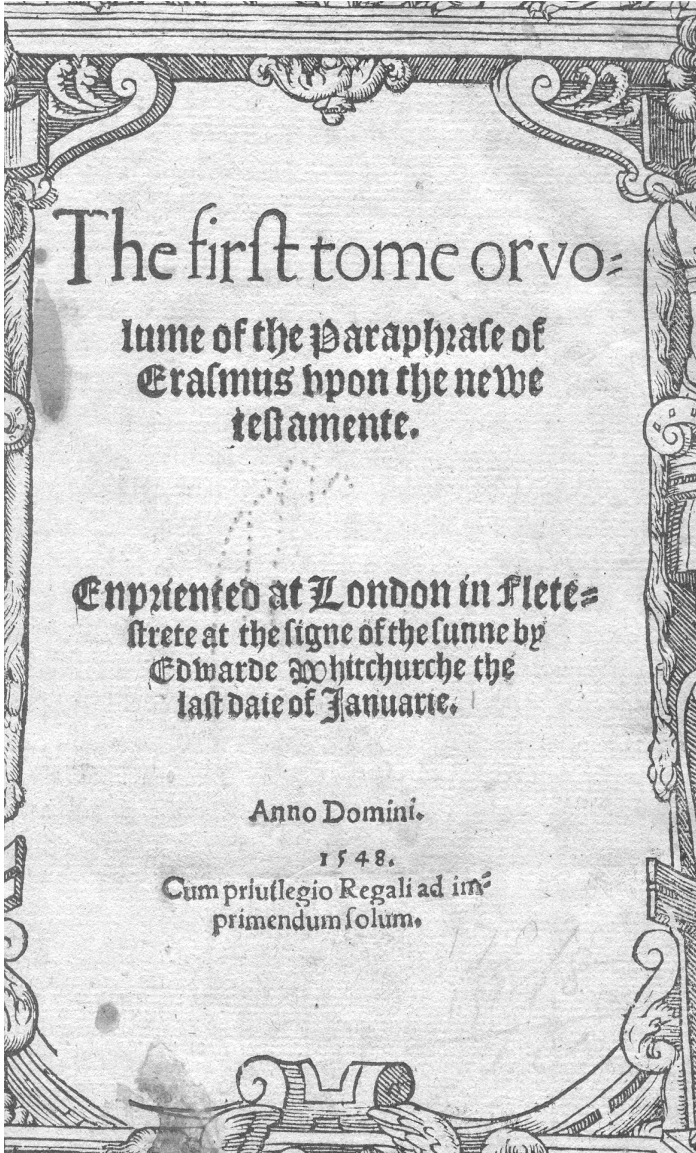
WHO

has a “voice like him?” Job 40:9.
The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty...
The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars ...
The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.
The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; ...
The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calf, and
discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth everyone
speak of his

Glory ...

Ps. 29





Taken from the title page of the English translation of Erasmus' commentary on the New Testament